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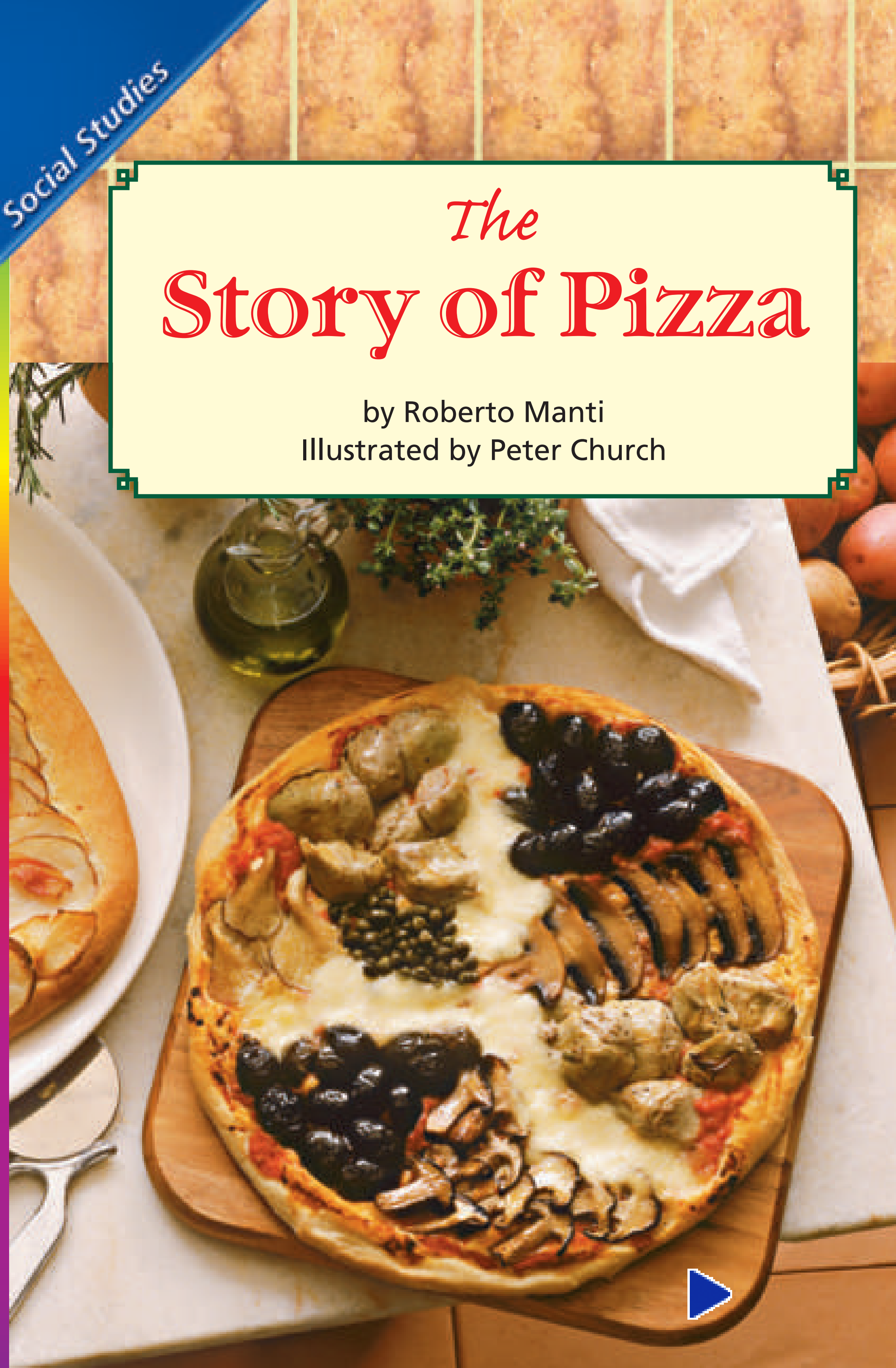
Social Studies

Genre	Build Background	Access Content	Extend Language
Narrative Nonfiction	• Food History • Pizza • World Cultures	• Map • Definitions • Captions • Labels	• Pizza Words

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The Story of Pizza

by Roberto Manti
Illustrated by Peter Church



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The idea for pizza began in Greece.



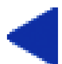
Do you like pizza? Many people do. How did pizza get its start?

Long ago people in Greece baked flat bread in round shapes. They added spices, olive oil, and olives on top. These were the first pizzas.

In the 1800s, the idea of making round, flat bread came to Naples, Italy. Here the modern-day pizza was born.

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modern-day: present day, today



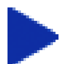




Many families in Naples were poor. People didn't have much food to cook with. They had flour, olive oil, cheese, and spices. The people learned to put these ingredients together. They made round, flat dough. They put olive oil, cheese, and spices on top. Then they baked it. They could feed their hungry families with this food.

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flour: finely ground wheat used to make bread and other baked food







These round and flat breads were given the name *pizzas*. They were sold in the markets. A pizza did not cost much money to make. It tasted good. People felt full when they ate pizza. People who didn't have much money could buy pizza.



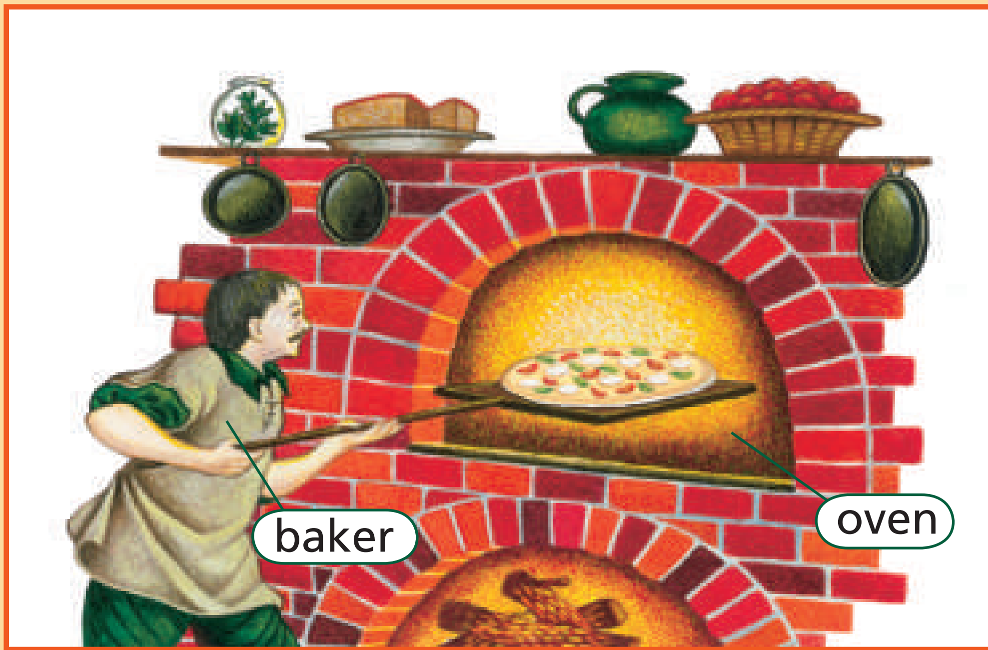




In 1889, Queen Margherita and King Umberto decided to visit the cities of their kingdom, Italy. The queen saw many poor people eating pizza. She wanted to try it too. She asked her guards to bring her some pizza.

The queen loved pizza! This upset some people. How could the queen eat poor people's food? The queen didn't care what people thought. She wanted more pizza. She asked the best pizza baker to make a pizza just for her.



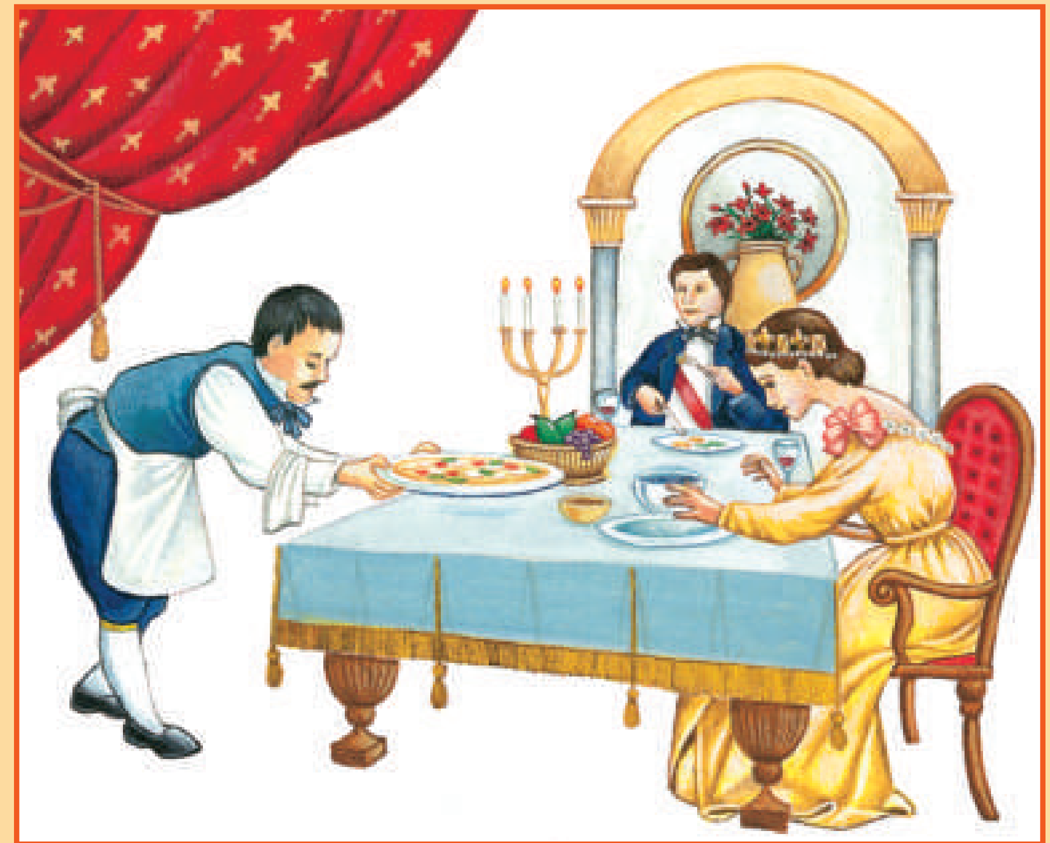




The baker's name was Rafaelle Esposito. He wanted to make a very special pizza for the queen. The colors of Italy's flag were red, green, and white. The baker wanted to use these colors on the pizza.

He used white cheese. He used red tomatoes. He used fresh green basil leaves. He baked the pizza. Then he brought it to the queen. It was the first pizza delivery!

basil: plant used in food





The queen loved the pizza. This special pizza was named Pizza Margherita in the queen's honor.

Soon people all over Italy, both rich and poor, were eating pizza. They began to make different kinds of pizza. People added meat to their pizza. They added vegetables.








People in other countries started to eat pizza. In 1897, Gennaro Lombardi came to America from Naples. In 1905, he opened the first pizzeria on Spring Street in New York City. A pizzeria is a restaurant that sells pizza. He baked his pizza in a brick oven. Lombardi's pizzeria is still on Spring Street. There you can still get delicious pizza.

Today, people eat a lot of pizza. There are many Americans who each eat about twenty-three pounds of pizza during a year!







Pizza can be square or round.



Pizza comes in all shapes and sizes. You can buy a small pizza for one person. You can buy a pizza that will feed eight people. In Havana, Florida, people baked a pizza that was over 100 feet across. But that wasn't the biggest pizza ever made. The biggest pizza was made in South Africa in 1990. It measured 122 feet across!





Pizza comes in many flavors too. In Mexico people make Mexican pizza. Mexican pizza can be topped with cheese, onions, tomatoes, and chili peppers. Would you like to try this spicy pizza?







You don't have to go to Hawaii to try Hawaiian pizza. Many pizzerias serve this delicious pizza. A Hawaiian pizza can be topped with ham, green peppers, and pineapple chunks. Would you like to try this yummy pizza?



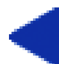






In Japan, people eat a lot of fish. It is not surprising that many Japanese people like fish on their pizzas. A seafood pizza can be topped with salmon, shrimp, or squid!

The next time you eat pizza, think about pizza's long delicious history.





Talk About It

1. Why was pizza the food for the poor people of Naples?
2. Why do you think the rich people in Italy began eating pizza?

Write About It

3. On a separate sheet of paper, write three sentences telling what you like about pizza.

Extend Language

Flour is used to make pizza. People put *cheese* on top of pizzas. What else can you put on pizzas? Look in the story.

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